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but regard as a decided weakness. In our judgment, Professor Ménégoz does not do full justice to the older evangelicalism in identifying its standpoint with that of the Athanasian creed. There is a difference between the position taken in that creed, which condemns to everlasting perdition all those who do not accept its formula on the Trinity, and the evangelicalism of today, which, we believe, does not insist on the acceptance of any formulæ as conditions of salvation, but holds that sane intellectual notions are involved in the act of faith, and, so far forth, are necessary to salvation. As far as the Athanasian creed is concerned, we are inclined to think that one of Professor Ménégoz's critics (Essay No. 20) is correct in repudiating it in the name of evangelicalism. Its damnatory clause is certainly not commonly held by evangelicals, and very few of the reformed churches recognize it as a standard at all. The corner-stone of evangelicalism we take to be the truth that personal trust in Jesus Christ as the Savior from sin is the sufficient ground of acceptance with God. The act of faith is complex. It includes an act of intellect as well as one of sensibility and one of will. What renders faith an effectual medium of salvation? Ménégoz seems to say the act of will alone, whereby one gives himself to God in consecration. We would say neither the act of will alone nor that of sensibility or intellect alone, but all together as a single act of faith.

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### THE PHYSICAL RELATION OF MAN TO GOD AMONG THE MODERN SEMITES.

ONLY rather obscure traces are to be found of the physical fatherhood of Deity among modern Semites. The subject cannot be discussed by making use of veiled expressions. I shall try not to offend against delicacy, but I must use words which are unambiguous.

There is perhaps no clear proof of the existence of the notion that God is the father of a clan, tribe, or family. For this there is a sufficient reason in the fact that such an idea would be most repugnant to Islam as well as to ancient Christianity. Here if anywhere old Semitic ideas should have become extinct. I can present only such hints as I have found in certain expressions and usages, and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions. These hints are not limited to the representations

of God, since it seems quite certain that to the ignorant mind<sup>1</sup> there is practically no clear distinction between the divine powers of God himself and those of the saint or the departed spirit;<sup>2</sup> each in his own domain may exercise an authority which to the simple peasant or the Bedouin is what we should term supernatural and divine.

We have seen how the conceptions of God are humanized, while those of "the saints" are deified.<sup>3</sup> We need, therefore, in order to make an intelligent induction, to examine every expression or usage which indicates that spiritual existences may have the power of fatherhood. It is certain that we cannot be sure of finding such traces at any given point, but, coming to us from many points, often unexpectedly, they may be none the less significant. Were we to ask the question, "Is there evidence that God is regarded as the physical father of any clan, tribe, or people among the modern Semites?" we should be compelled, as far as my investigations have gone, to answer No. There is no such clear-cut statement, so far as I am aware, of a belief among the modern Semites of the physical fatherhood of Deity, such as is said to exist among the Tongas, who affirm: "God had three sons, the whites, the Zulus, and the Tongas."<sup>4</sup>

I found the investigation, leading to data necessary in order to form a conclusion, delicate and difficult, not because the modern Semite hesitates to discuss such themes—quite the contrary—but because the facts which have a bearing upon the subject are more likely to come by indirection, and when least expected, than by any formal inquiries.

There seem to be pretty clear indications that ignorant Moslems and Christians conceive of God as possessed of a complete male organism, and that this is not merely popular language. The Moslems at Hama, in northern Syria, swear by God's phallus.<sup>5</sup> In the village of Bludan, about twenty-five miles west from Damascus, which is composed of Greek Christians of a very low type, the same oath is heard on the lips of women, who sometimes are so shameless as to giggle when using it, thus showing that they are conscious of its

<sup>1</sup> For these ideas see W. ROBERTSON SMITH, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (New York, 1889), pp. 41-3.

<sup>2</sup> FRASER, *Golden Bough* (London, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 129, 130.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. my article on "Modern Semitic Conceptions of God," *Biblical World*, Vol. XIX, pp. 122-31.

<sup>4</sup> Personal interview, W. L. Thompson, M.D., missionary of the A. B. C. F. M., Mount Silinda, east central Africa.

<sup>5</sup> "Journal," Vol. XI, summer of 1901.

meaning.<sup>6</sup> Another form of oath of a similar sort may be heard in Nebk, in the Syrian desert, and at Zebedani.<sup>7</sup>

At Kerak, whenever there is a drought, the Greek Christians dress a winnowing fork in women's clothes. This they call the "bride of God." The girls and women carry it from house to house, singing doggerel songs.<sup>8</sup> This expression, "bride of God," naturally reminds us of the "bride of the Nile," who, according to a tradition given by Lane, was anciently thrown into the arms of the river-god, when the water began to rise.<sup>9</sup>

There is a further illustration, from another country, which shows how far superstition may descend in lowering the conception of God. Some ignorant members of the Greek church, in Syria, speak of the virgin Mary as the "bride of God." We do not know what they may understand by this term, but in Porto Rico a Catholic was living openly with a woman to whom he was not married. When rebuked by a Syrian who was residing in that country, he replied that there was no wrong in what he was doing, for he was simply following the example of God, who still lived with the virgin Mary.<sup>10</sup>

Among the Ismailiyeh there is said to be a sacred maiden whose distinctive features, eyes, and color of hair are known from their holy books, and whose body is considered the abode of Deity. She is introduced into the sacred assemblies of the initiated, and stands exposed before them, and was once seen for a moment by a Protestant Syrian who went to call on an intimate friend among the Ismailiyeh. Fearing for his life, he fled, and emigrated to a foreign land. This sacred maiden is said to be descended from the Son of God.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Rev. J. Stewart Crawford, who has his summer home at Bludan.

<sup>7</sup> Suleiman, teacher in the Irish Presbyterian Mission at Nebk, and Abdullah, teacher in the American Presbyterian Mission at Hama.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Mr. Henry G. Harding, formerly of Kerak, now of Gaza, pharmacist of the medical mission of C. M. S. of Great Britain; cf. FRASER, *Golden Bough* (London, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 95, 213.

<sup>9</sup> LANE, an account of *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (London, 1898), p. 500: "The Arab general was told that the Egyptians were accustomed, at the period when the Nile began to rise, to deck a young virgin in gay apparel and throw her into the river as a sacrifice to obtain a plentiful inundation."

<sup>10</sup> "Journal," Vol. XI, summer of 1901.

<sup>11</sup> The custom to which allusion is made has been repeatedly charged to the Nusairiyeh, and as often denied by Protestants in different parts of the country. The circumstance mentioned in connection with the Ismailiyeh was detailed to me by a credible witness, who heard it from the Syrian, with whom he was well acquainted, and who was compelled to flee for his life. The point of this incident is that the people claim that this young woman is directly descended from the Son of God.

Procreative power is attributed by the Syrians to the spirits of the dead. It is well known that they affirm that the *jinn* may have sexual intercourse with men and women ; of this fact Baldensperger has given some fresh examples.<sup>12</sup> It is said that women sometimes find that their best gowns, which they had carefully locked up in their bridal chests, have been worn and soiled by female spirits during their confinement.<sup>13</sup> But the view that the spirits of the dead may beget children is held to the extent that it is believed a widow may conceive by her husband for nine months after his death.

It is said that a woman at Nebk took the bath of ceremonial purification,<sup>14</sup> because she dreamed she had received a visit from her deceased husband.

There is a man in Nebk who is currently believed to be the offspring of such a union, and no reproach was ever cast upon his mother. There is also a person in Nebk who is considered by the simple people to be the child of a *jinn*.<sup>15</sup>

Another form of the same belief is doubtless in a singular custom of which I have heard of two examples. When a man had been executed for murder at the Jaffa gate in Jerusalem, more than thirty years ago, some barren women rushed up to the corpse and took their place by it as if it had procreative power.<sup>16</sup> It may be that they felt that such a union would be proper, inasmuch as the man had been released by death from previous nuptials, and was free, as a disembodied spirit, and endowed with supernatural power to give them the joy of motherhood.

We also seem to find the same idea in the connection of barren women with the spirits of sacred shrines of various sorts, or with those whom, in their ignorance, they suppose to be spirits.

It is said that they visit the hot springs, at a place of which the name is unknown to me, and take their position over the steaming vapors, of which the *weli* is the source.

About four hours from Karyaten, on the way to Sadad, the Zedad of Scripture,<sup>17</sup> are the so-called baths of Solomon, where there are extensive

<sup>12</sup> *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* for 1899 (London), pp. 148, 149.

<sup>13</sup> "Journal," Vol. X, Nebk, summer of 1901.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. Lev. 15 : 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. X, Nebk, Suleiman.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, summer of 1900 ; Rev. J. Edward Hanauer, of Christ Church, Jerusalem ; cf. LANE, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

<sup>17</sup> Numb. 34 : 8.

ruins of buildings on a grand scale. Only part of the arches that supported the superstructure now remain. There are three places where the hot air comes out of the ground, many yards apart. One of these is in the floor of quite a room, with walls and a roof of stone. The heat is so intense that it is not possible to endure it many minutes. The other hot-air vents are in the field. One of these is a famous shrine for women who are barren and desire children, called Abu Rabbah. They really regard the *weli* of the shrine as the father of their children born after such a visit, as appears from the rendering of an Arabic couplet which they repeat as they go inside the small inclosure, consisting of a rude stone wall about four feet high, and take their seat over the vent in the rock, while the hot air streams up their bodies :

Oh, Abu Rabbah !  
To thee come the white ones,  
To thee come the fair ones ;  
With thee is the generation,  
With us is the conception.

The native teacher's wife said she knew of two barren women who had recently had children after visiting this shrine. When a child is born as the result of such a visit, it is customary, after the immolation of the victim, to partake of a meal, which is eaten in the shade of the vaulted ruin near by, and to which the friends of the family from the neighboring villages are invited.<sup>18</sup>

Almost equally significant is another curious custom in connection with some of the channels of the Orontes used for irrigation. During a certain season of the year the water is turned off, and the channels are cleared of mud and any matter which might clog the flow of the water. The first night that the water is turned on it is said to have the power of procreation (it is called *dekr*). Barren women take their places in the channel,<sup>19</sup> waiting for the embrace of the water-spirit in the onrush of the stream.

Naturally there are certain shrines to which barren women go that they may have the reproach of childlessness removed. Sometimes a woman, standing below one of the saint's pictures at a Christian shrine, covered with a wire netting with some projecting points, taking her headdress in her hand, tries to drive a sharp bargain with the saint for the gift of the desired child. Giving the cloth a fling toward the

<sup>18</sup> "Journal," Vol. I, Karyaten, autumn of 1898 ; Syrian teacher's wife.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, Hums and Braigh, summer of 1901.

wire netting, she bids one piastre;<sup>20</sup> if it catches in one of the projections, she considers it a sign that the saint will give her a child, and that after its birth she is to pay the sum of one piastre; if, however, the cloth falls, she understands that her offer has been rejected, and that the saint insists on more money; so, raising up the cloth, she gives it another fling and says two piastres. This she does until it catches. When this takes place she goes away in the firm belief she is to have a son, and with the understanding that when he is born she is to bring to the shrine the sum last named.

There are, however, barren women of all sects, including Moslems, who go to the shrine of the most powerful saint in all Syria. There are many who shrug their shoulders when this shrine is mentioned, but it is doubtless true that many do not know what seems to be its real character, and who think that the most puissant saint, as they believe, in the world can give them sons. Why should not ignorance and superstition, in its eagerness for children, in some cases be unsuspecting? If a dead husband can be the parent of a child; if Abu Rabbah can give seed; if a woman can conceive by a water-spirit, why should she not believe a monkish tale that Mar Jurjis will be a husband to her and give her conception?

There has been one credible witness of the abominations of the shrine to which I allude, who spent the night there and observed how the women stole out at midnight, in pairs, at intervals of half an hour, to the ancient church which is in the lowest part of the monastery. One went within, while one waited at the entrance without. He could form but one conclusion as to the one who actually personated the *weli* at the place within, where there was a dimly burning taper. After the pair had gone, he pressed in and found a monk, who, when upbraided, said that the women had come there for a blessing, and that he had supplied them with a charm that would cure them of their barrenness.

This famous shrine was once visited by many Moslem women who desired offspring, and who went with the full consent of their husbands; but now the true character of the place is beginning to be recognized, so that many Moslems have forbidden their wives to visit it.<sup>21</sup>

There is another example which probably belongs to a similar category. There is a cave at Junch, in which there is a pool of water. The natives believe that a childless couple who bathe in the waters of

<sup>20</sup> "Journal," Vol. I, Safita, autumn of 1898.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, village near Hama. I had the incident from the lips of the man who visited the shrine, who is one of the most trustworthy in all Syria.

this cave will have children. Undoubtedly the cave is inhabited by a *weli* who has, as the peasants think, the power to make a barren marriage fruitful.<sup>22</sup>

All these examples seem to show clearly enough that there is no difficulty among certain ignorant Syrians and Arabs in conceiving of God as endowed with a complete male organism, nor is there any impropriety, from their point of view, in using such an expression as the "bride of God." The idea that a *weli* may be a physical father is one of which there is more than one example; and the notion is currently believed, as we have seen, that disembodied spirits may still beget children from a mortal woman, either those who have been their own wives or from others; while it is commonly held that a *jinn* may have an earthly wife, or that a man may have a spirit wife who will not tolerate his looking at any woman. These phenomena seem to point back to a time, already considered, when there was no distinction between God, the *weli*, the departed spirit, and the *jinn*. Hence the being to whom the Semite did homage was endowed with physical fatherhood. If, now, we regard the departed spirit, who is held in love and reverence, hence enjoys the title of *weli*, as the only deity who has any practical bearing on the life of the modern Semite, we may claim that the idea of the physical fatherhood of Deity still exists.

There are various indications of a relationship between men and divine beings. The term *weli*, as I have shown in another article, indicates the one who may be nearest of kin, hence the one, according to the Arabic version, to marry the childless widow of a brother or of one closely related.

From this point of view it is perhaps significant that the grave of the *weli* is often among the graves of his tribe, or clan, the most conspicuous of them all.<sup>23</sup>

But, more than this, there are not only clans and families who claim to have sprung from one original ancestor, but also from one patron saint or *weli*. These are to be found among certain tribes of Arabs.<sup>24</sup> While the Nusairiyeh make such high claims for Ali as to

<sup>22</sup> "Journal," Vol. X, Beirut; William Van Dyck, M.D.

<sup>23</sup> Personal observation in many parts of the country.

<sup>24</sup> EBERS, *Durch Gosen zum Sinai* (Leipzig, 1872), p. 239: "Die Şawâleḥa-Beduinen halten Schech Şâlih für ihren Ahnherrn und glauben, dass er ihrem Stamme den Namen gegeben;" cf. "Journal," Vol. XII, interview with the chief of the Rawaein at Mehardeh: "They make their vows to patron saints, and these are mostly progenitors of tribes." We inferred that the subdivisions of the Aneze and others have patron saints. As to the descent of the Nusairiyeh from Nusair, see "Journal," Vol. XI, at Behammra.



deny that he had children, there are others who affirm that the Nusairiyeh were descended from Ali through Nusair.

The idea that God may have sons by physical generation is common among all peoples who speak of him as a man. There is one passage in the Old Testament which seems to have taken its color from such an old Semitic conception. I refer to Gen. 6 : 1-4 :

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God (*benai Elohim*) saw the daughters of men that they were fair ; and they took them wives of all that they chose. . . . The *nephilim* were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them : the same were the mighty men which were of old, the men of renown.

In the light of Semitic modes of thought, I do not think the interpretation which has been regnant in certain circles since the time of Augustine and Chrysostom, that the sons of God were the pious Sethites and the daughters of men were Canaanitish women, was at all intended by the writer. It is questionable, too, whether angelic beings were intended, as we understand the term. So far as the meaning of the passage is concerned, were not the Sethites men? Did they not begin to multiply upon the earth? Did they not have daughters born to them? Were there not fair women among them? It seems to me that nothing but a desire to render the scriptural narrative edifying has led to this traditional interpretation, which is clearly allegorical. I am well aware that the term "son" in Semitic speech is often not to be taken too literally, but here it certainly indicates superhuman beings, at least what we might call demigods. Out of their connection with earth-born women are born men of extraordinary physical development. We are no more to go to such a passage for doctrine than to other passages in the Old Testament for teaching regarding the future state.<sup>25</sup>

We are not, however, to suppose that any Old Testament writer thought of God as a physical father, but some appear to speak of heathen gods as if they were real existences. We have, as it seems to me, the true reading given by Wellhausen in the polychrome text of Ps. 58 : 1 :

Speak ye indeed what is right, ye gods?  
Do ye judge men without partiality?  
Nay, rather, on earth are your judgments confusion,  
Your hands weigh out what is wrong.

<sup>25</sup> Job 3 : 17, 18 ; Isa. 14 : 9, 10.

It is from this point of view, in which the writer acknowledges their real existence, that Wellhausen well says :

The gods are not human rulers. They are divinities worshiped by the heathen, and placed by JHVH at the head of the nations (Psalms 29, 82). They are held responsible for the conduct of their subjects. If they are righteous gods, they must maintain righteousness and justice within their domain. In point of fact, their rule is thoroughly discredited by the disorderliness and licentiousness of their subjects (vss. 3-5). . . . Seeing, then, that they fail in their duty, or are incompetent for their task, JHVH himself must interpose, and execute justice against the heathen in order that it may be seen that there is one Supreme Deity upon the earth who judges.

So the sons of God, whoever they may be, come to present themselves before the Lord, as if he held a court like an earthly king ; hence the writer sees no impropriety in the adversary presenting himself also, and receiving permission to lay his hand on Job.<sup>26</sup> It is thus that an ancient Semitic conception of divine beings, called *Elohim*, but not regarded as men, is alluded to in a way which would escape the reader of the ordinary English version. While the Old Testament writers never conceive of men as having physical relations to God, they do not hesitate to speak of the sons of God as having children, as we have seen, or of heathen gods as having offspring. This appears from two passages quoted by W. Robertson Smith :<sup>27</sup>

Woe to thee, Moab !  
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh :  
He hath given his sons as fugitives,  
And his daughters into captivity,  
Unto Sihon, king of the Amorites.<sup>28</sup>

Here, then, it is the Moabite god Chemosh who gives up his children. The phraseology of the following passage in this connection is very significant : "Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loveth, and hath married the daughter of a strange god."<sup>29</sup> This view of the heathen divinity, like that in the passages cited above, looks upon them as real existences, who have the power of physical fatherhood. The ancient as well as the modern Semite did not philosophize, nor see any inconsistency in acknowledging the existence of heathen deities, as subordinate to the government of God, and

<sup>26</sup> Job 1 : 6-12 ; 2 : 1-6.

<sup>28</sup> Numb. 21 : 29.

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 42, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Mal. 2 : 11.

as having children, like the Moabites, who were sprung from their loins. In the same way, while the modern Semite does not clearly think of God as procreator, he certainly holds that a disembodied spirit, whether that of an ordinary man or of a *weli*, can become a physical father.

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